



Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 89

TRAINING RECRUITS AND INTEGRATING APPRENTICES INTO THE WORKFORCE

The training of recruits is an investment in the Coast Guard's future. Transforming civilian volunteers into qualified apprentices is a major responsibility shared among recruiters, a professional staff at Cape May and all of us who work with the new graduates. Training Center Cape May has been the sole home of the Coast Guard's enlisted corps for over 18 years. After some time, most, if not all of us, have "selective memories" of our Coast Guard indoctrination experience, whether it be the Academy, Officer Candidate School or Cape May. Also unfortunately a relatively few officers have visited Cape May, hence the majority of our Service actually knows little, if anything at all, about what happens in boot camp. Since becoming the Assistant Commandant for Human Resources, I have heard a range of comments about the performance of entry-level men and women. Misperceptions and the lack of discussion about the field's role in the continued indoctrination of apprentices concern me. The most popular target for complaints is our recruit training program at Cape May. "What are they teaching recruits these days?"

First, let me address the implication that Training Center Cape May has softened or deleted critical elements of the traditional boot camp program - *NOT SO!* When our most senior enlisted members visit Cape May, they see recruits doing many of the same things that they themselves experienced in years past. If anything, perhaps the current program can be criticized as not changing with the times. Today's recruits are different. They are more comfortable using technology, more independent, and possess high expectations on issues affecting quality of life and job satisfaction. The Coast Guard has also changed. Smaller crews use significant advances in technology to prosecute a different mix of missions. Heavy operational demands within an austere resource environment heighten the importance of a capable workforce. Readyng today's recruits to perform and reach their full potential in the 21st-Century Coast Guard requires a new approach that is well underway. In response to the Nonrate Workforce Structure Study (NWSS), we are building a comprehensive program to better prepare entry-level men and women for career success.

Even though it will be some time before we completely implement the NWSS findings, it is very clear that apprentice development requires an integrated system. The journey to pride and professionalism spans the entire enlisted accession and indoctrination system from recruiting, through basic training, into initial assignments. We have already made some noteworthy investments at the front end. We increased the number of recruiters, enhanced their Class C School, and expanded marketing programs and enlistment incentives. On the training side, we upgraded classrooms and facilities in Cape May to maximize instructional effectiveness. We've improved the selection and preparation of Company Commanders, including a strong emphasis on understanding and using motivation strategies to make each recruit the best they can be. NWSS-driven revisions to the recruit training curriculum are in progress. Yet, all these initiatives will be in vain unless field units reinforce and continue the

professional development and mentoring that started with the first recruiter contact and continued at Cape May.

Bringing men and women into the Coast Guard and helping them become high performing apprentices is a collaborative process. By the time apprentices leave Cape May, over one hundred people have contributed to their induction and indoctrination. Boot camp is a life-changing experience of intense mental, physical, emotional, and personal challenge. At its conclusion, these graduates have proven ready for the ultimate test, a job in the Coast Guard and the chance to learn a noble profession. They are willing and able to serve with a sense of pride and commitment - commitment to the Coast Guard and its standards as well as a commitment to continued learning.

So, graduation from boot camp is really a beginning. As apprentices begin their service to our Nation, their first units must begin helping them establish productive and personally rewarding careers. It takes only moments to welcome a new shipmate aboard but it takes months of dedicated effort to integrate that person into the crew. It may be a lengthy and tiresome process to continually train new people, but it is essential to the future of our Service. It is the duty of everyone in the Coast Guard to assist these young people to fit in, succeed, and contribute to our organization. Each apprentice who does not live up to our standards is a leadership challenge. Like it or not, the people we bring in do reflect the values of the greater American society. It is the utmost imperative that our senior petty officers, chief petty officers and officers make the time to teach and mold our junior members -- this is most basic leadership performance. In many regards, the failure of any one Coast Guard man or women is a collective failure. I readily admit that some individuals choose not to adopt our values of Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty. These few should be identified and, after appropriate effort has been made to correct their deficiencies, discharged.

The Junior Enlisted Management Study (JEMS) was chartered to determine the optimal method of managing the junior enlisted workforce. Although JEMS is not complete, I support the study's determination that a member's entire initial enlistment should constitute an Apprentice Program. Under this concept, new recruits will affiliate with a rating matched to their aptitude and interests, as well as Service needs, during the recruiting process. After boot camp, and perhaps Class A School, the member would complete his or her apprenticeship at the first unit. Rigorous training would culminate in certification as a "journey worker," paralleling the civilian professional certification process. This Program will afford greater proficiency and improved stability to both the unit and member.

The Coast Guard is experiencing changing but exciting times. We are competing with industry and the other Armed Services for motivated, high-quality men and women. I think we offer an excellent package of job opportunities, but we still have to work hard to attract and retain good people. Initiatives like the NWSS and JEMS hold much promise for the future, yet will take time to fully develop and implement. Nor will these initiatives alone achieve the results we need. Let us not forget that the key to professional development of our junior people remains leadership - leadership by recruiters, leadership by the Cape May and Class A School staffs, and most importantly, leadership aboard our cutters and units in the field. The permanent unit, more than any other, including training centers, has the greatest influence over the attitudes and behavior of our junior enlisted members. We should each ask ourselves, "What are we teaching apprentices these days?"

I encourage leaders, whether officer or enlisted, junior or senior, to fully engage in developing our people. Every one of our apprentices will have other options in life when his or her enlistment ends. The Coast Guard Recruiting Center, Training Center Cape May and field units, in strategic partnership, must make the Coast Guard the employer of choice.

To increase familiarity with the program at Cape May, I've included some frequently asked questions and answers. If you want to see things first-hand, I recommend that you mentor a recruit company. As such a volunteer, you will bring information and leadership to the classroom to benefit recruits, and at the same time get a fresh look at boot camp.

Believe it or not, about one-fourth of our Cape May graduates never complete their four year contract. While we do better than the DoD services who loose about one-third, this is nothing to be proud of. Just imagine the waste of recruiting, training and transfer dollars and experience, not to mention administrative processing time throughout the field and at the Personnel Command. Do we

really treat people as our most valuable resource? Do we walk the talk? Think about the accountability at a unit if a weapon is lost. I am certain there will be a thorough investigation and the "guilty" party dealt with, procedures changed, etc. Now, what is the accountability for "loosing" one of your people early to RELAD or retirement? Is our attitude that the system will just send us a replacement?

What do recruits learn in boot camp?

Basic training, just 53-days long, molds the individual's personal approach to military duty, ethics, and relationships with others. Graduates are ready to serve because they demonstrate the military skills and self-discipline that exemplify Coast Guard men and women, they possess the basic knowledge required of an apprentice, and they have been exposed to Service missions, duties, career paths, and opportunities. Graduates are able to serve because they are physically and mentally fit to begin their apprenticeships. Each recruit completes the Personal Qualification Standards for an E-2.

How can I become a Company Mentor?

Company mentors are volunteers who meet with the company three times, including speaking at the graduation ceremony. Candidates should be experienced role models and top performers. They answer a lot of questions, put to rest concerns, and generally help recruits prepare for the transition to their first units. Although not a funded program, there are overnight accommodations in the UPH and many units do pay travel expenses. Contact the Command Master Chief, Master Chief Dave Evans, (609) 898- 6923, for further details and an application.

What small arms training is provided?

Cape May teaches weapons familiarization and safety on the 9mm personal defense weapon. Every recruit has the opportunity to shoot the Basic Pistol Marksmanship Course twice. Weapons qualifications are annotated on the recruits' ADC for CGPC-epm to use in making assignments. In response to field prompting, Cape May is considering ways to increase range time for all recruits without diminishing other aspects of training.

Does Cape May issue orders and determine who will become seaman apprentices, fireman apprentices, and airman apprentices?

Similar to Service-wide management of military personnel, CGPC-epm makes assignment decisions, not Training Center Cape May. CGPC-epm also designates affiliation with a career path, taking into account guaranteed schools, personal preferences, and Service needs.

Why can't Cape May finish all dental work prior to graduation?

As part of the on-going workforce restoration plan, the Coast Guard decided to accept recruits at all levels of dental qualification, including many who would formerly have been disqualified. Every effort is made to provide a fit-for-full duty, operationally ready member to the field. However, the greater number of recruits who now require extensive dental treatment exceeds the capacity of Cape May's clinic, even with regular TAD augmentation and an additional dental officer billet. Consequently, some apprentices will report to their units requiring dental care (i.e., they may arrive in other than dental Class I status). Dental Class I and Class II apprentices are qualified for sea duty or overseas assignment. Cape May will notify units by message when incoming apprentices are not Class I so that follow-up care can be scheduled on-site. Normally, Cape May will hold Class III apprentices and bring them to Class I status before transfer, unless another option is specifically agreed upon by Training Center Cape May's Senior Dental Officer, CDR Mike Korale at (609) 898-6960, and the field unit.

How do I know when an apprentice will arrive at my unit?

Recruit Enlisted Transfer Order (ETO) messages contain assignments and important, comprehensive instructions for receiving commands. Actual reporting dates vary dependent upon authorized travel, leave, and participation in the hometown recruiting program. An engaging unit Sponsor Program is an important part of the transition from Cape May. Due to the heavy volume of orders and short amount of processing time, individual copies of apprentices' orders are not distributed in advance. The apprentice's PDR is mailed to the servicing PERSRU within 3 working days of graduation and should arrive before the member reports to the new unit. (After migration from SDAII to SWIII, orders will be available on-line two weeks before graduation.) The sponsor is a vital link for advance notification of arrival date, assistance with logistics and housing questions, and resolution of needs prior to the apprentice reporting. I recently lifted the 12-day restriction on "recruit" leave. Graduates are permitted regular leave in accordance with the same provisions that apply to all active duty personnel. In response to field input, reporting dates are coordinated to ensure arrival during normal working hours, Monday through Thursday. Please mail welcome aboard materials to the apprentice's home address. The Chief of the Recruit PERSRU is CWO Marty Shepler, who you may contact at (609) 898-6911.

Why don't apprentices receive advance travel funds?

The Pay Manual stipulates that apprentices will receive \$500 in advance pay to assist with travel expenses to the first duty station. There is insufficient time to process advance travel requests through HRSIC for all graduates. However, advance travel monies may be issued in addition to advance pay if the authorized travel expenses will exceed \$500. Normally, this is only necessary as a supplement for the apprentices who elect to drive cross-country enroute Seventeenth District units.

What PCS travel options are available to recruits and who counsels them?

Recruits are given a PCS election worksheet as soon as the recruit ETO is received by Cape May, normally in the fifth week of training. They have four travel options, in accordance with JFTR U5105 travel policy. Recruits may select from the following: travel by POC; personally procure common carrier transportation with reimbursement later; transportation in kind (GTR); or mixed-mode travel (POC and commercial modes). When OCONUS travel is involved, the recruit may elect any option to perform the INCONUS leg of the journey, with the remaining travel from the final INCONUS port to the overseas duty station directed via GTR. Although the decision on traveling to the first duty station is left to the member, each recruit must first attend a class on PCS procedures and entitlements and receive guidance, including one-on-one counseling, from the RPERSRU staff and the on-site travel agency. Government contract airfares play a major role in the decision process.

Why can't the apprentice proceed directly to meet the ship at a location other than the homeport?

Cape May is obligated to prepare orders to the homeport of INCONUS vessels so that the apprentice can execute his or her full PCS entitlements from Cape May to the new duty station. The vessel may request their local supporting command to direct the member to report to any location to meet them when away from homeport. Additional travel to meet the vessel is chargeable against the apprentice's PCS TONO.

Why is the quality and fitness of apprentices sometimes a problem - why can't Cape May do better screening, especially for mental fitness?

FY 99 attrition at Cape May was just under 9%, one of the lowest rates among the Armed Services. During initial screening and throughout boot camp, the staff closely monitors medical, dental, drug and alcohol histories, and performance-based reasons for disqualification. Not every problem will surface in the short period of training and not every recruit is completely truthful in revealing all circumstances about their backgrounds. If issues are known, Training Center Cape May will address and resolve them prior to sending the member to their first unit. Although some of the Services administer psychological tests to incoming recruits, their results have been mixed and the Coast Guard has no plan to initiate entry-level psychological testing. The medical staff at Cape May completes a short, directed interview with every recruit within two days of their arrival. This includes a review of each

member's health history, and whenever warranted, a more extended evaluation by the staff psychiatrist. When adjustment problems and mental health issues arise soon after an apprentice's arrival at the first unit, it is likely that motivation and the changed circumstances, and perhaps even the accuracy of the diagnosis, are contributing factors beyond the control of Cape May. Training Center Cape May encourages timely feedback from commands that wish to discuss cases of particular concern. Primary points of contact are CDR Maura Dollymore, Chief of Health Services Division, at (609) 898-6957 and CDR Preston Gibson, Training Officer, at (609) 898-6527.

When will NWSS changes to the recruit curriculum occur?

The NWSS defined the optimal apprentice and made seven recommendations to overcome specific gaps in current training. These include: placing recruits in a realistic shipboard environment; providing DOD parity by incorporating a culminating training event; certifying recruits in CPR and first aid; raising recruit physical fitness levels to exceed boat crew standards; improving orientation to the Coast Guard, the first unit, and career options; building teamwork and watchstanding skills in a maritime setting; and encouraging recruits to identify themselves as Coast Guard men and women. The Resource Proposal to fund the staff, equipment, and lengthened program required for implementation is being considered for funding in FY 02. A team is actively developing curriculum and planning facility modifications to allow phased changes if partial funding is available earlier. LCDR Don Robison is leading the Apprentice Curriculum Development Team. His number is (609) 898-6819.

I have seen new recruits with serious financial problems. What financial screening and advice/instruction do the new recruits get?

All potential enlistees fill out a Statement of Financial Obligations/Spouse Consent form (CG 4891). Recruiters turn away those individuals whose financial situation exceeds a 30% debt load ratio unless there are extenuating circumstances, which are then resolved on a case by case basis. Credit checks prior to enlistment have been discussed but the present decision is not to use them due to the cost for this service. All recruits attend a class on financial planning during the fifth week of training. The instructor covers the importance of managing and the skills necessary to manage the following elements of personal finances: budget; direct deposit; checking account; credit/ bankcards; and deposits/withdrawals. Additionally, the instructor advises recruits of the consequences of financial mismanagement. Recruits who indicate a need for counseling and intervention (triggered by self-admission, making it incumbent upon recruits choosing to be fully truthful in revealing problems) or who have been identified as at-risk by pre-screening, are referred to one of Cape May's financial management counselors for assistance. Discharge is an option for handling extreme cases which are not deemed manageable. Flag Voice 87 discusses financial management assistance options -- counseling and education -- available to help all of us improve our financial situations.

Regards, FL Ames

[Flag Voice Contents](#)

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